

the childish malice of princes. Of that cosmopolitan country, destined to be the refuge of the international idea when outlawed by every other power in Europe, Antwerp, "a home common to all nations/¹ was the most cosmopolitan city. Made famous as a centre of learning by Plantin's press, the metropolis of painting in a country where painting was almost a national industry, it was at once the shrine to which masters like Cranach, Diirer and Holbein made their pilgrimage of devotion, and an asylum which offered to the refugees of less happy countries a haven as yet undisturbed by any systematic campaign to stamp out heresy. In the exuberance of its intellectual life, as in the glitter of its material prosperity, the thinker and the reformer found a spiritual home, where the energies of the new age seemed gathered for a bound into that land of happiness and dreams, for the scene of which More, who knew his Europe, chose as the least incredible setting the garden of his lodgings at Antwerp.

The economic pre-eminence of Antwerp owed much to the industrial region behind it, from which the woollen and worsteds of Valenciennes and Tournai, the tapestries of Brussels and Oudenarde, the iron of Namur, and the munitions of the Black Country round Liège, poured in an unceasing stream on to its quays.⁶ But Antwerp was a European, rather than a

Flemish, metro-
polis. Long the competitor of Bruges for the
reception
of the two great currents of trade from the
Mediterranean and the Baltic, which met in the Low
Countries,
by the last quarter of the fifteenth century
she had
crushed her rival. • ' The Hanse League
maintained a
dep6t at Antwerp ; Italian banking firms in
increasing
numbers opened businesses there ; the
English Merchant
Adventurers made it the ent_rep6t
through which
English cloth, long its principal import, was
distributed
to northern Europe ; the copper market
moved from
Venice to Antwerp in the nineties. Then
came the
great Discoveries, and Antwerp, the first
city to tap the